

**Listing of Claims:**

1. (Currently Amended) A method of forming a hollow stepped shaft, comprising ~~the steps of:~~

holding an upper axial part and a lower axial part ~~axially~~ of a solid rod-like blank with an upper and a lower die, respectively, which ~~have~~ define a stepped recess of large diameter in a region ~~thereof~~ where ~~they~~ the upper and lower dies are opposed to each other;

compressing the blank from ~~both~~ ~~its~~ axially opposite sides thereof with an upper punch and a lower punch, respectively, each of which is smaller in diameter than the blank and at least one of which is moving during the compressing, thereby extruding the blank ~~so such~~ that an axial hollow is formed therein in each of said upper and lower parts about ~~its~~ an axis of the blank, with a solid plug-like portion left in between the axial hollows, such ~~in each of said upper and lower parts~~ and that a portion of the blank opposed to said stepped recess of large diameter expands in diameter and deforms into said recess, and such that the blank expands axially to become longer while said portion of the blank deforms into said recess; while leaving a solid plug-like portion ~~between said punches~~, and

thereafter ~~further~~ compressively moving one of said punches to shear said solid plug-like portion away from the blank and to force it out of the blank,

whereby wherein, as a result, said blank is formed with a  
25 stepped portion of large diameter by radially expanding the  
radial expansion and deformation, with a long axial portion, in a  
region intermediate between its opposed ends, or at one of these  
ends and with a continuous axial hollow about its the axis of the  
30 blank, thereby forming such that a hollow stepped shaft is  
formed.

2. (Currently Amended) A method of forming a hollow stepped shaft as set forth in claim 1, wherein said solid rod-like blank is loaded into said upper and lower dies which while the upper  
5 and lower dies are in a closed die-fastened state and thereafter extrusion of the blank is performed with said punches.

3. (Currently Amended) A method of forming a hollow stepped shaft as set forth in claim 1, wherein said solid rod-like blank is loaded into said upper and lower dies which while the upper  
5 and lower dies are in an open die-unfastened state and thereafter extrusion of the blank are is performed with said punches while said dies are being closed and fastened.

4. (Currently Amended) A method of forming a hollow stepped shaft as set forth in any one of claims 1 to 3, wherein the  
method further comprises a further step wherein a further

comprising adding an additional contour to the hollow stepped  
5 shaft so formed as aforesaid is further formed in another die  
set. to impart an additional outer contour thereto.

5. (Currently Amended) A method of forming a hollow stepped shaft as set forth in claim 4, wherein ~~in said further step,~~ said additional outer contour is imparted to the hollow stepped shaft ~~with~~ while a mandrel is inserted therein.

Claims 6-13 (Canceled).

14. (Withdrawn) A hollow stepped shaft formed by a method as set forth in any one of claims 1 to 3.

Claim 15 (Canceled).

16. (Withdrawn) A hollow stepped shaft formed by a method as set forth in claim 4.

17. (Withdrawn) A hollow stepped shaft formed by a method as set forth in claim 5.

Claims 18 and 19 (Canceled).